

Message Text

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SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTER'S RESPONSE TO PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRIES

ON US AMPHIBIOUS EXERCISES

REF: ATHENS 8890

1. MINISTER OF DEFENSE AVEROFF HAS SUBMITTED A WRITTEN REPLY
IN PARLIAMENT TO TWO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS CONCERNING US
MARINE CORPS AMPHIBIOUS EXERCISES IN GREECE. THE QUESTIONS
WERE SUBMITTED IN JULY AND AUGUST BY FOUR COMMUNIST DEPUTIES
--HARALAMBOS DRAKOPoulos AND LEONIDAS KYRKOS (COMMUNIST PARTY
OF THE INTERIOR), AND CONSTANTINE KAPPOS AND DIMITRIOS
GONTIKAS (COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE EXTERIOR). (GONTIKAS IS FROM
PIRAEUS, THE OTHERS FROM THE ATHENS AREA.)

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2. BOTH QUESTIONS WERE PEGGED TO PHIBLEX 2-7T (REFTEL) WHICH TOOK PLACE AUGUST 15-22 AT THE SOUTHEASTERN TIP OF THE PELOPONNESUS. AT THE TIME, SPECULATION IN THE PRESS THAT AN AMPHIBIOUS LANDING EXERCISE BY US FORCES WAS TO TAKE PLACE IN THE PELOPONNESUS IN MID-AUGUST, LED TO UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS BY LEFTIST YOUTH GROUPS AND THE COMMUNIST PRESS TO GENERATE PUBLIC PROTESTS AGAINST THE EXERCISE. IN ADDITION, ON JULY 27, IN A WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION ADDRESSED TO THE MIN OF DEFENSE, KYRKOS AND DRAKOPOULOS ATTACKED THE HOLDING OF ANY SUCH EXERCISE. THEY INDICATED THAT IT WOULD BE IN VIOLATION OF THE CONSTITUTION AS NO LAW HAD BEEN PASSED "FOR A FOREIGN MILITARY FORCE TO BE ACCEPTED IN THE GREEK STATE" (AS REQUIRED BY ARTICLE 27, PARA 2 OF THE CONSTITUTION). FURTHERMORE, THEY SAID, THE EXERCISE WAS ILL-CONSIDERED, GIVEN THE INCREASING TENSION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, TURKISH AGGRESSIVENESS, AND MANY-SIDED AMERICAN PRESSURES. IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT EVENTS AND THE REACTION IN RHODES AND OTHER CITIES (TO US NAVY SHIP VISITS), THEY MAINTAINED THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT HAVE GRANTED PERMISSION FOR THIS EXERCISE. THEY THEN ASKED IF THE GOVT INTENDED TO REEXAMINE ITS DECISION TO AUTHORIZE THE EXERCISE.

3. GONTIKAS AND KAPPOS PRESENTED THEIR QUESTION ON AUG 18, AS THE EXERCISE WAS IN PROGRESS, ALLEGING THAT INHABITANTS OF AREAS WHERE OTHER EXERCISES HAD BEEN HELD WERE PROTESTING CROP DAMAGE, ACTS OF VIOLENCE AND ASSAULTS AGAINST WOMEN BY THE MARINES. THEY ASKED IF THE MIN OF DEFENSE KNEW OF THE PROTESTS AND WHAT SECURITY MEASURES HE WOULD TAKE IN THE PHIBLEX 2-7T AREA TO PROTECT THE CROPS AND THE PEOPLE.

4. THE DEFENSE MINISTERS RESPONSE TO BOTH QUESTIONS STATED THAT "AMERICAN AMPHIBIOUS EXERCISES (PHIBLEX) ON GREEK TERRITORY ALWAYS TAKE PLACE ON THE BASIS OF A PERTINENT APPLICATION BY US AUTHORITIES WHICH THE GREEK GOVERNMENT GRANTS" FOLLOWING AN ASSESSMENT OF THE GREEK INTEREST INVOLVED AND OF THE FAMILIARIZATION THE GREEK ARMED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FORCES WILL GAIN IN AMPHIBIOUS WARFARE. REFERRING SPECIFICALLY TO PHIBLEX 2-7T, AVEROFF NOTED THAT THE EXERCISE HAD BEEN IN THE GENERAL DEFENSE AND MILITARY INTERESTS OF GREECE; THAT OBSERVERS FROM ALL THREE BRANCHES OF THE HELLENIC ARMED FORCES HAD, AS A RESULT, FAMILIARIZED THEMSELVES WITH MODERN AMPHIBIOUS TECHNIQUES; AND THAT NECESSARY MEASURES HAD BEEN TAKEN FOR COMPENSATION OF ANY CROP DAMAGE WHICH MIGHT HAVE

OCCURRED. HE ALSO NOTED THAT THE EXERCISE HAD NO CONNECTION WITH NATO.

5. IN ADDITION, MINISTER AVEROFF POINTED OUT THAT NO QUESTION OF VIOLATION OF THE CONSTITUTION AROSE SINCE IT WAS AN EXERCISE OF A LIMITED SCALE AND DURATION, AND DID NOT INVOLVE THE STATIONING OF FOREIGN TROOPS. MOREOVER, THE EXERCISE WAS OF BENEFIT TO GREECE'S ARMED FORCES, HE ADDED, AND CONCLUDED THAT UNDER PRESENT TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR GREECE'S AMPHIBIOUS FORCES THIS HAS SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR ANYBODY INTERESTED IN THE COUNTRY'S DEFENSE.

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